**thE SEVEN QUESTIONS THAT DEFINE A WORLDVIEW**

**Adapted from :** Freddy Davis, 2006

**Discovering Worldviews Around Us**  
As we seek to interact with people who have other worldviews, we also need to be careful… regardless of the particular attitude of the individuals we engage in life, we need to be able to understand where they are coming from in their beliefs…

So just how do we identify the basic beliefs of an individual at the **worldview** level? It is actually not nearly as difficult as it might appear on the surface. While the whole concept of worldview may seem a bit **philosophical** and esoteric, when you start getting down to specifics it is actually quite practical and reasonable.

There are several different approaches that various philosophers have identified to get at worldview. That being said, they all ultimately address the same issues. To me, the easiest and most comprehensive approach is the one used by Dr. James Sire in this book, *The Universe Next Door*. In this **groundbreaking** work, Dr. Sire proposes seven questions. By answering these seven questions, it becomes very easy to get at the worldview **assumptions** of any person of belief system. Below we will go through the seven questions and identify the kinds of answers that each worldview would give.

***1. What is the Nature of Ultimate Reality?***  
This first worldview question relates to the very nature of reality in its entirety. The main focus of the issues it raises involve whether or not there is such a thing as the supernatural. If there is, what is it like? It deals with such questions as:

* Is there a God or not? If there is, what is that he like? If there is no God, what is the origin of **material** reality?
* Are there multiple gods? If so, what are they like?

***2. What is the nature of material reality?***  
There have been those who have questioned whether or not the material world we live in really exists, and have suggested that it is an **illusion** in one form or another. However, since it is the physical world that we live our lives in, most people assume that it actually does exist. That being said, not everyone agrees as to the nature of the material world. In fact, every worldview has a different **perspective** about it. Different worldview possibilities include:

* It is created or uncreated?
* It is orderly or chaotic?
* It is **subjective or objective?**
* It is personal or impersonal?
* It is eternal or temporal?

***3. What is a human being?***  
The nature of worldview is such that it might seem strange to many people to even ask a question like this. We all have an underlying **presupposition** about what a human being is and we simply assume that everyone else understands it in the same way we do. That is simply not the case. Different worldviews hold entirely different understandings about it. And the reason it is important is because different understandings result in different ways of valuing and treating other people.

Some of the different possible answers posited by various worldviews concerning the nature of a human being include:

* A highly evolved biological machine.
* A god or potential god- form of energy which shifts forms through successive existences.
* A person made in the image of God.

***4. What happens to a person at death?***  
Every worldview has its ideas about what happens after you die. While this might not seem very important, actually it affects our lives deeply . For instance, if a person believes there is nothing after they die, why is there any reason to refuse oneself anything in this life. Here are some of the answers that various worldviews give concerning life after death.

* People cease to exist.
* Individuals are transformed to a higher state.
* People reincarnate into another life on earth.
* People depart to a shadowy existence on “the other side.”
* Individuals enter into the spiritual realm (heaven, hell, or other place) based on how life was lived on earth.
* People enter directly into heaven.

***5. Why is it possible to know anything at all?***  
It is interesting to think that different people might actually have a different way of thinking about what they know. Different worldviews actually do have different ways of understanding what we know – from considering it to be an illusion to thinking of it as an objective and places in between. These are some of the ways that various worldviews deal with the issue of knowledge.

* Consciousness and rationality developed through a long process of evolution.
* There is no “reason” that human beings are able to have knowledge. That is just the nature of our existence.
* Knowledge is an illusion.
* Humans are made in the image of God who, himself, has knowledge.

***6. How do we know what is right and wrong?***  
As we look around the world at the differences in various cultures, one of the things that jumps out quickly is that there are certain **moral** principles that are almost **universal**. Questions related to honesty and integrity, sexual issues, how we should treat other people and so on are **integral parts** of every society. Even when individuals or societies don’t seem to follow the principles, they will still tell you that they exist. The search to identify what is right and wrong and to give reasons for why morality should be dealt with certain ways is an integral part of every worldview. Here are some of the ways that various worldviews deal with this issue.

* Right and wrong are strictly products of human choice.
* Right and wrong are determined by what feels good.
* A sense of right and wrong was an evolutionary development as a survival mechanism for the species.
* Right and wrong are learned by experience as we learn what pleases the gods.
* We are made in the image of God whose character is good and who has revealed what is right.

***7. What is the meaning of human history?***  
Some may wonder why the issue of time is included in the questions about worldview. Actually, the focus is more on the issue of meaning than it is on time. The search for **meaning** may be the most profound issue that human beings deal with in life. It is so **profound** that some people even choose to end their lives because the cannot manage to find a reason to continue on. Different worldviews have different ways of addressing this question. Some of the various worldviews deal with this by asserting:

* There is no innate meaning to human history. Meaning is what humans make it to be.
* Time is an illusion.
* Meaning involves realizing the purpose of the gods.
* Meaning results from discovering and fulfilling the purpose of God.

*Adapted from:* [*http://www.marketfaith.org/the-seven-questions-that-define-a-worldview/*](http://www.marketfaith.org/the-seven-questions-that-define-a-worldview/)

**VOCABULARY DEFINITION SENTENCE**

**attitude (N)**

**philosophical (ADJ)**

**assumptions (N)**

**material (ADJ)**

**groundbreaking (ADJ)**

**material (ADJ)**

**illusion (N)**

**subjective (ADV)**

**objective (ADJ)**

**presupposition (N)**

**moral (ADJ)**

**integral (ADJ) parts**

**profound (ADJ)**

**worldview** (N) a particular philosophy of life or conception of the world.

I have broadened my worldview by experiencing a whole new culture.